PROVISION FOR POST-PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10

EVALUATION REPORT

UDF-GLO-09-283 – Democratizing governance for development: LDC civil society engagement (Global)

Date: 18 April 2014

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i.   Project Data

From 1 August 2010 to 31 August 2012, the CSO umbrella organization LDC Watch received UNDEF support for the project "Democratizing governance for development: LDC civil society engagement". LDC Watch, which is headquartered in Kathmandu, Nepal, is a coalition of some 20 organizations whose collaborative focus is the UN process relating to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). As part of this project, also, LDC Watch engaged its members in the 2010 review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The project ran for 25 months, and was timed to coincide with UN processes related to follow-up of the outcome document of the Third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-III) in Brussels in 2001, known as the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) and preparations for the Fourth UN Conference on the LDCs (LDC-IV) held in Istanbul in May 2011. The UNDEF grant amounted to USD 325,000, including USD 25,000 set aside for evaluation. LDC Watch leveraged co-financing from various sources of an additional USD 145,000.

The project's objective was: "To further develop CSO capacity and to mobilize and consolidate LDC CSOs' energy, expertise and commitment to achieving quality interventions/inputs to the 2010 MDG Comprehensive Review Summit and LDC-IV, thereby strengthening democratic decision making in international development processes."

It had three intended outcomes:
- Enhanced capacity of CSOs and CBOs;
- Increased awareness and coverage of LDC issues;
- Progress and setbacks on MDGs and BPoA reviewed.

LDC Watch listed 20 countries in which the project would undertake activities: 13 in Africa, 2 in South Asia, 2 in South-East Asia and 3 in Pacific Island Countries (PICs). LDC Watch affiliates act as regional secretariats in West Africa (Organisation africaine de recherche et de coopération pour l'appui au développement endogène -- ARCADE) in Dakar, Senegal; ENDA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; SILAKA in Phnom Penh, Cambodia; and Eurostep in Brussels, Belgium. There are also focal point organizations in Geneva, New York, Vienna and Helsinki.

LDC Watch set out to implement the project through a series of actions:
- Organizing 20 one- or two-day national consultations in 20 LDCs for 500 people;
- Annual three-day capacity-building/planning workshops in Africa and the Asia-Pacific;
- Advocacy and lobbying through LDC Watch national and regional focal points.

During implementation these plans changed quite considerably. Details are given in the body of the report.

During a field mission to Nepal (effective dates 26 – 28 February 2014), the evaluators interviewed staff of the grantee, and the former head of the NGO coalition in Nepal. The international expert also undertook desk research relating to the UN/LDC process, including consulting remotely with the UN entity charged with leading the LDC process, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS). Because LDC Watch's CSO partners are spread across several regions, interviews with representatives of these organizations were conducted remotely after the field mission. Delays in receiving responses meant that these interviews were not completed until 4 April 2014.

ii.   Evaluation questions

Questions related to the **relevance** of the project were focused at three different levels. First, the evaluators considered whether LDC Watch itself is relevant to the international process relating to LDC development. This may seem not to derive from the project, however it is essential to the eventual outcomes of the project. The evaluators considered that, because LDC Watch is the only coalition bringing together the views and efforts of CSOs in the LDCs, and because this is implicitly recognized by UN-OHRLLS, the convenor of the LDC conferences, as well as the UN's regional commissions, the organization is *de facto* relevant.

Second, the evaluators also considered whether the planned activities were relevant in relation to achieving the aims outlined in the project plan and, in particular, whether the project relied too much on the "headquarters" actions of LDC Watch and not enough on the LDC CSOs it set out to both represent and empower. The evaluators concluded that the project was not well planned in relation to servicing the capacity-building and empowerment needs of the CSO participants, and to this extent, its relevance was compromised in this area.

Finally, the evaluators were concerned that the project as planned did not sufficiently take into account the nature of CSO influence on the LDC agenda. This occurs not at international level but at national level, and many respondents highlighted the need for CSOs to work effectively to influence their own governments so that they could then carry forward the country's agenda – including the priorities identified by CSOs – to international forums.

To evaluate the project's **effectiveness**, the evaluators reviewed the activities carried out and the numbers of targeted participants they had mobilized. The project had originally envisaged 500 constituents participating in 20 national consultations. During implementation, the number of national consultations was reduced to 14, for a number of reasons including security concerns. However the numbers of participants in each consultation were not increased, so that in the end only 300 participants took part in the meetings. This was disappointing.

The evaluators were also concerned that the regional and global meetings that were planned as part of the project in fact took place under the banner of other organizations. It was not clear whether UNDEF funds were used, for example, to fund travel for some participants, however ultimately these events were not UNDEF-supported events and it is likely that they would have taken place even without the project funding.

The project was judged to be **efficient** to the extent that headquarters costs were minimal and most of the funds were used to support the participation of CSOs in the various meetings held during the implementation period. The budget allocation to information and dissemination, however, was extremely skewed towards the production of hard copy reports and papers (most probably for dissemination at meetings), while the information needs of the CSO constituents in relation to networking and information exchange was not prioritized and, for example, the LDC Watch website seems under-resourced. This is of particular concern because the principal UN entities involved in the LDC process provide links to CSO-originating reports posted on the LDC Watch site.

The evaluators considered **impact** at a number of different levels. The impact of project activities on CSO partners was appreciated but not necessarily those intended as priority outcomes. Most of the respondents, for example, listed "networking and getting to know other LDC CSOs" as the most important outcome for them (underlining the need for a collaborative on-line platform), but many also expressed disappointment that the capacity building and skills training they needed had not been provided.

The impact of the project on regional and international processes was impossible to measure. While most respondents considered that just being part of the international debate on LDCs

was a sufficient outcome, others reiterated that what CSOs must do as a priority is focus on work at national, and even local levels, since this is ultimately where they can both bring about change and also engage national governments in the issues they would like to see raised in regional and international forums.

This is reflected also in differing views on whether the project, that is the efforts of LDC CSOs and LDC Watch as their representative, had any meaningful impact on the outcome document of LDC-IV, the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA). Many believed that this essentially governmental process was not open to CSO intervention, although related processes such as media coverage of LDC issues was more likely to reflect CSO inputs.

The evaluators expressed concern that **sustainability** must be addressed as a matter of priority. The value of LDC Watch as a coordinating body is not in dispute, however its members do not pay fees and it has no way to raise funds other than through projects submitted to donors. Given the 10-year interlude between LDC conferences, the evaluators believed that LDC Watch cannot simply continue advocacy actions but must put in place a strategy and workplan that reflect the needs of its members and that might include actions – like training and information processes – that donors would consider funding.

Between conferences, also, LDC Watch might realistically look at the future structure of the organization. While the organization is currently well led by a coordinator whose credibility and reputation at regional and international levels are significant and open many doors, there seem to be no succession plans in place and this is a threat to sustainability.

In attempting to identify **UNDEF value-added**, the evaluators took note of the comments of respondents relating to how UNDEF support had provided leverage, however the very nature of the activities undertaken – which are embedded in existing and ongoing UN processes – meant that other UN entities were involved in the actions and in many cases banners, publications and outcomes carried their emblems and not UNDEF's.

iii. Conclusions
The evaluators drew the following conclusions:

▪ ***The project was relevant in relation to the general coordinating/representational role of LDC Watch.*** LDC Watch's recognized leadership of means that the components of the project that aimed to build on this were *de facto* relevant.

▪ ***The relevance of the project is questionable, however, in relation to the capacity building and empowerment of constituent CSOs who participated in the project.*** Insufficient attention was paid to the capacity-building needs of the CSO partners.

▪ ***The project was only partially effective.*** The activities directly resulting from the project were outnumbered by those that would have taken place even without UNDEF support.

▪ ***The number of participants from partner CSOs should have been higher.*** It is disappointing that only 300 CSO representatives participated in the national and regional consultations – 60 per cent of the target.

▪ ***The advocacy component hijacked the potential for capacity building.*** The heavy load of speaking engagements across the globe (essential to advocacy outcomes) meant that the intended outcome of strengthening and empowerment of partner CSOs was not well developed.

▪ *The modest funds allocated to headquarters support suggest that many of the activities undertaken were independent of the UNDEF grant.* Additional funds of USD 145,000 from other donors indicate that many of the components of the project would have taken place without the grant and have been funded by others.

▪ *More investment needs to be made in modalities for facilitating networking and information exchange among the CSO partners.* Not enough attention has been paid to the very important role that some form of interactive platform for networking and information exchange plays in keeping partners informed and allowing them to share and exchange ideas.

▪ *LDC Watch has an important role to play in capacity building and training of CSO partners*. A number of respondents called for more formal training and capacity building in the skills required to equip CSOs to function effectively at national level.

▪ *LDC CSOs' major area of influence is in the work they do in relation to their own governments and indeed at other levels of authority in their countries*. Respondents believed that LDC Watch had a role to play in helping CSO partners to do this better and that indeed it may be LDC Watch's main role.

▪ *The impact of the project activities on the LDC-IV outcome document is questionable.* Few respondents considered that CSO efforts had translated into impact on the outcome of LDC-IV (the IP0A), which is essentially a political outcome decided by governments.

▪ *Ongoing funding is a threat to sustainability.* The nature of LDC Watch and the decade-long interlude between LDC conferences, mean that raising funds is an ongoing challenge.

▪ *Over-reliance on one person's credibility and profile is a risk*. Succession planning, especially now in the interlude between LDC conferences, should be a priority.

▪ *The value-added of the project to UNDEF is not clear*. UNDEF's support was not highly visible and was probably not determinant.

iv.   Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, the evaluators offer the following recommendations (explained in more detail in the body of the report):

For LDC Watch:

▪ *Take the opportunity of the interlude between LDC conferences to strategize the role of LDC Watch in coming years and build a workplan around this.* The evaluation indicated that there is unmet demand for capacity building, training and guidance that will help CSOs to work more effectively at national and local levels and ultimately better influence their national governments so that they then carry forward more CSO priorities into international forums. Additionally, it is important to remember that, ultimately, UN conferences are inter-governmental meetings that set the agenda for government actions in implementing the agreements made. The time for influence (and advocacy and lobbying) is in the months

and years between conferences, and this realistically must be done at national level. LDC Watch has a role to play in reinforcing CSOs' capacities to do this on an ongoing basis. Moreover, such a role might realistically attract funding support on a more consistent basis.

This is an overarching recommendation that derives from six of the 12 conclusions reached by the evaluators.

▪ ***While developing a robust strategy and plans for the future, consider also the risks to sustainability and act to mitigate these.*** The first risk is funding; a new action plan that takes account of distinct needs identified by the CSO partners might go some way to addressing this. The second principal risk arises from potential over-reliance on one person to carry forward the reputation and many of the outputs of the organization. It would be a good idea for the Board to begin to consider potential succession plans now, while there is some "down time" for the organization.

▪ ***Despite scarce resources, make sure that (as far as possible) sufficient resources are allocated to the LDC Watch website and other on-line mechanisms for networking and exchange***. As a loosely structured coalition, LDC Watch must depend on technology to provide the links that CSO members need to keep in touch, source needed materials and engage in exchange of ideas and experiences.

I.   Introduction and development context

i.   The project and evaluation objectives

From 1 August 2010 to 31 August 2012, the umbrella organization LDC Watch received UNDEF support for the project "Democratizing governance for development: LDC civil society engagement". LDC Watch, which is headquartered in Kathmandu, Nepal, is a coalition of some 20 organizations (the number fluctuates) whose collaborative focus is the UN process relating to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The project ran for 25 months, and was timed to coincide with UN processes related to follow-up of the Brussels Plan of Action (BPoA) -- the outcome document of the Third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-III) in Brussels in 2001; the 2010 review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and preparations for the Fourth UN Conference on the LDCs (LDC-IV) held in Istanbul in May 2011. The UNDEF grant amounted to USD 325,000, including USD 25,000 set aside for evaluation. LDC Watch leveraged co-financing from various sources of an additional USD 145,000.

The project's objective was stated in the Project Document as:
> "To further develop CSO capacity and to mobilize and consolidate LDC CSOs' energy, expertise and commitment to achieving quality interventions/inputs to the 2010 MDG Comprehensive Review Summit and LDC-IV, thereby strengthening democratic decision making in international development processes."

The project had three general intended outcomes:
- Enhanced capacity of CSOs and CBOs;
- Increased awareness and coverage of LDC issues;
- Progress and setbacks on MDGs and BPoA reviewed.

The strategy and specific actions undertaken to achieve these outcomes are outlined in the next section of this report and a logframe constructed as part of the project evaluation demonstrates the links between the actions, outcomes and objectives.

A team comprising an international evaluator and a local expert conducted an evaluation mission in Nepal in February 2014 as part of a series of post-project evaluations funded by UNDEF. These evaluations are designed "to undertake an in-depth analysis of UNDEF-funded projects to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project, which in turn helps UNDEF devise future project strategies. Evaluations also assist stakeholders in determining whether projects have been implemented according to the project document and whether the intended project outcomes have been achieved".[1]

ii.   Evaluation methodology

The international expert designated to lead the evaluation prepared a preliminary planning note (Launch Note) in January 2014 in consultation with the Transtec Evaluation Manager and with input from the local expert. The Note was based on a review of project documentation (see Annex 2). Meanwhile, the grantee and the local expert began developing a schedule of interviews that would take place during the field mission to Nepal (effective dates 26 – 28 February 2014) and collecting additional materials.

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[1]   Operational Manual setting Transtec evaluation methodology, page 6.

The evaluators interviewed staff of the grantee, LDC Watch, and the former head of the NGO coalition in Nepal. The international expert also undertook desk research relating to the UN/LDC process, including consulting remotely with UN-OHRLLS. Because LDC Watch's CSO partners are spread across several regions, interviews with representatives of these organizations were conducted remotely after the field mission. Delays in receiving responses meant that these interviews were not completed until 4 April 2014. The full list of people interviewed is included as Annex 3.

Information was collected, analysed and is presented in this report according to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation questions are outlined in more detail in Annex 1.

iii.   Development context

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) represent the poorest and weakest segment of the international community. In January 2014, the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) noted that they comprise more than 880 million people (about 12 per cent of world population), but account for less than 2 per cent of world GDP and about 1 per cent of global trade in goods.

According to UN-OHRLLS,[2] "the LDC's low level of socio-economic development is characterized by weak human and institutional capacities, low and unequally distributed income and scarcity of domestic financial resources. They often suffer from governance crisis, political instability and, in some cases, internal and external conflicts. Their largely agrarian economies are affected by a vicious cycle of low productivity and low investment. They rely on the export of few primary commodities as major source of export and fiscal earnings, which makes them highly vulnerable to external terms-of-trade shocks. Only a handful has been able to diversify into the manufacturing sector, though with a limited range of products in labour-intensive industries such as textiles and clothing. These constraints are responsible for insufficient domestic resource mobilization, low economic management capacity, weaknesses in programme design and implementation, chronic external deficits, high debt burdens and heavy dependence on external financing that have kept LDCs in a poverty trap".

The notion of "Least Developed Country" was first used in the late 1960s and cited for the first time in UN documentation in General Assembly Resolution 2768 (XXVI) of 18 November 1971. Resolution 2768 listed the first group of LDCs and gave three criteria for this category:[3]

- Poverty (adjustable criterion based on three-year average GNI per capita);
- Human resource weakness (based on indicators of nutrition, health, education and adult literacy); and
- Economic vulnerability (based on instability of agricultural production, instability of exports of goods and services, economic importance of non-traditional activities, merchandise export concentration, handicap of economic smallness, and the percentage of population displaced by natural disasters).

LDC criteria are reviewed every three years by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Countries may "graduate" out of the LDC classification when indicators exceed these criteria. The January 2014 list of LDCs includes 48 countries: 34 in Africa, 13 in Asia and the Pacific and one in Latin America.

Since the LDC category was initiated, only three countries have graduated to "developing country" status: Botswana in 1994, Cape Verde in 2007 and Maldives in January 2011.

To focus attention on the needs of LDCs and to encourage international action to support countries on the path to graduation, the First UN Conference on the LDCs was held in Paris in

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[2]   Information downloaded and adapted from www.unohrlls.org, 8 April 2014.
[3]   26th Session of the UN General Assembly, 2768 (XXVI): Identification of the least developed among the developing countries (18 November 1971).

1981. It adopted a comprehensive *Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s* for the LDCs. To continue focus on the need for special measures for these countries, the Second UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-II) was held in 1990, also in Paris, adopting the *Paris Declaration and the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s*. The Third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-III) was held in 2001 in Brussels, hosted by the European Union, and adopted the *Brussels Declaration and the Brussels Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2001 – 2010* (the BPoA).

UN-OHRLLS was established by General Assembly Resolution 56/227 after LDC-III to ensure effective follow-up, implementation, monitoring and review of the implementation of the BPoA.

Despite international efforts, however, most of the LDCs, according to UN-OHRLLS, are far from meeting the internationally agreed goals, including the MDGs, and still face massive development challenges. Progress in economic growth has made little dent on poverty and social disparities; hunger and malnutrition are widespread and bring "dire consequences" for the large vulnerable populations.

In response to these still urgent challenges and "to reinvigorate the pledge in support of LDCs' development and transformation", the international community met in Istanbul, Turkey, for the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV) in May 2011. LDC-IV provided an opportunity to deepen the global partnership in support of LDCs and set the framework for development cooperation for the next decade.

LDC-IV adopted the 10-year *Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA)* and the *Istanbul Declaration*. The IPoA sets an ambitious goal of enabling half the number of LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020.

More than 8,900 accredited participants, including 36 Heads of State or Government, 200 parliamentarians, including 10 speakers, 96 ministers and 60 heads of the UN and other international organizations as well as more than 1,500 civil society representatives and 500 business leaders attended the Istanbul Conference. In preparation for LDC-IV, regional meetings were held for government delegations and, in most regions, parallel civil society events were organized. These were coordinated, as was civil society participation in LDC-IV, by a Civil Society Steering Committee convened by UN-OHRLLS and chaired by the grantee, LDC Watch.

It is within this context, and in response to these UN-driven processes, that the current project was developed and implemented.

II. Project strategy

i. Project approach and strategy

The LDC Watch project had three strategic aims:

1. Enhancing the capacity and empowerment of LDC civil society to provide quality inputs to the 2010 MDG Comprehensive Review Summit and BPoA review at LDC-IV;
2. Increasing awareness of the BPoA and MDG review and follow-up processes among other stakeholders (non-LDC civil society, government including parliamentarians and political parties, inter-governmental bodies, development partner organizations, Bretton Woods institutions, multilateral organizations, private sector and media);
3. Lobbying and advocacy to focus attention on the special situations/needs of LDCs in national, regional and international development processes.

These aims do not totally coincide with the intended outcomes, with a more active strategy of lobbying and advocacy (point 3) replacing the more passive intended outcome of 'review of progress and setbacks".

LDC Watch listed 20 countries in which the project would undertake activities: 13 in Africa, 2 in South Asia, 2 in South-East Asia and 3 in Pacific Island Countries (PICs). LDC Watch affiliates act as regional secretariats in West Africa (Organisation africaine de recherche et de coopération pour l'appui au développement endogène -- ARCADE) in Dakar, Senegal; ENDA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; SILAKA in Phnom Penh, Cambodia; and Eurostep in Brussels, Belgium. There are also focal point organizations in Geneva, New York, Vienna and Helsinki.

LDC Watch set out to implement these three strategic aims through a series of actions:
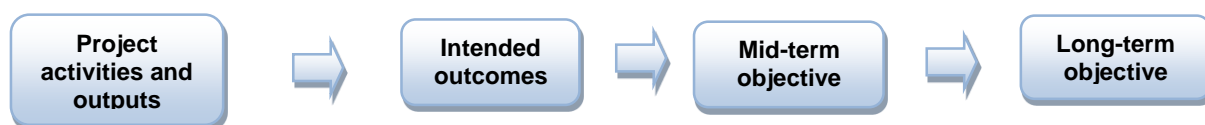
- Organizing 20 one- or two-day national consultations in 20 LDCs for 500 people;
- Annual three-day capacity-building/planning workshops in Africa and the Asia-Pacific;
- Advocacy and lobbying through LDC Watch national and regional focal points.

Because the project essentially paralleled the UN/LDC process, the number and locations of these events changed in practice:

- LDC Watch organized national consultations/workshops in 14 LDCs: Solomon Islands, Nepal, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Lao, DR Congo, Madagascar, Tanzania, Rwanda, Malawi, South Sudan, Sudan and Zambia. Ten of these workshops coincided with the original plans; four workshops were organized for new affiliates. Each workshop brought together 20 to 25 participants, with a total participation of 300 CSO, UN, governmental and media representatives.
- Five regional consultations were organized to elicit input to the BPoA and MDG reviews and canvass input for LDC-IV. These took place in Vanuatu, Auckland, Bangkok (2) and Addis Ababa.
- A global CSO assembly was convened in Dakar, Senegal, in January 2011 to coincide with the World Social Forum. It attracted 1,000 participants including 100 from the LDCs. This was not part of the original plan.
- LDC Watch participated in 16 advocacy events in parallel to the MDG review summit, the 2010 ASEM meeting in Brussels, COP16 in Mexico in 2010 and at other international community and government conferences throughout the project implementation period.
- Finally, advocacy and information materials were prepared and disseminated on a range of development issues covered during LDC-IV, for example climate change, food security and the role of LDCs in implementing the MDGs.

These three levels of strategic action, the intended outcomes and the link between these and the overall objective are illustrated in the logframe below, which aims to systematically capture the project logic (cause and effect):

ii. Logical framework

| Project activities and outputs | → | Intended outcomes | → | Mid-term objective | → | Long-term objective |

Project activities and outputs	Intended outcomes	Mid-term objective	Long-term objective
- 14 national consultations/ workshops are organized; - Five regional consultations take place to gather input to the BPoA and MDG reviews as well as LDC-IV; - A global assembly is convened bringing together CSO representatives and other participants	Progress and setbacks on MDGs and BPoA reviewed	Non-LDC civil society, government including parliamentarians and political parties, inter-governmental bodies, development partner organizations, Bretton Woods institutions, multilateral organizations, private sector and media are aware of the BPoA and MDG review and follow-up processes	Strengthen democratic decision making in international development processes.
	Enhanced capacity of CSOs and CBOs	LDC civil society provides quality inputs to the 2010 MDG Comprehensive Review Summit and BPoA review at LDC-IV	
- 16 advocacy events are organized to coincide with national, regional and international conferences and meetings - Advocacy and information materials are developed and disseminated	Increased awareness and coverage of LDC issues	Greater attention is paid to the special situations/requirements of LDCs in national, regional and international development processes	

III.   EQ answers / findings

i.   Relevance

The relevance of the LDC Watch project supported by UNDEF can be considered at a number of different levels:

The first relates to whether the LDC Watch coalition is itself relevant to the international process relating to LDC development. It must be said that similar coalitions have been organized around other UN processes – LDC Watch itself is modelled, for example, on the coalition known as Social Watch, which was established to coordinate civil society participation and input to the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995) and follow-up UN General Assembly Special Session (Geneva 2000).

The second is whether the actions planned and then implemented as part of the project were likely to achieve the outcomes and aims anticipated – that is, whether there was appropriate cause and effect.

The third is whether LDC input to international LDC processes were the desirable outcomes of the project in the first place, or whether the greatest impact of LDC CSOs lies rather in the influence and impact they can have at national level.

- ### *The coalition structure*
There is no doubt that organized NGO/CSO contributions to UN processes carry more weight than individual participation. In the case of CSOs from the LDCs, the cost of attending UN conferences or even the preparatory regional meetings is likely to exclude most organizations from attending, so some mechanism for capturing their views and representing them in the meetings is essential. The UN has explicitly recognized this in encouraging and facilitating the participation of NGO/CSO umbrella organizations in, or alongside regional and international meetings. Moreover, most of the LDC Watch partner organizations who responded to the interview questions sent to them believed that, if LDC CSOs are to have any impact at regional and international levels, they must come together and speak with one voice.

The current project – and indeed LDC Watch itself – was predicated on this reality. Through LDC Watch, the concerns of member organizations in Africa and Asia in particular would be represented in regional and international forums, and the consultative process that formed the major output of this project was designed to achieve that.

The endorsement of the LDC-led federation by UN-OHRLLS, the convenor of LDC-IV, points to the fact that the UN entity responsible for the LDC process sees this structure and the processes put in place to bring its voice to international meetings, as relevant.

This finding leads to Conclusion (i)

- ### *Cause and effect*
A much more difficult area of relevance to evaluate is the question of whether a limited number of country and regional meetings are sufficient to enable LDC Watch to appropriately and sufficiently represent LDC CSOs' views in international forums or whether, in fact, LDC Watch is in fact driving the agenda and the CSOs "come along for the ride". This was difficult to assess without in-depth meetings with all the federation members and in all probability the reality is that, in the case of weak CSOs, LDC Watch does indeed take the lead, while stronger CSOs contribute fully to the discussion and outcomes.

This is one reason why – particularly in the case of new members in South Sudan and Rwanda – the capacity-building elements of the planned national consultations were so important. Capacity building is essential not only to establishing balance between the views and priorities of national CSOs and the LDC Watch-led coalition, but also to support the lobbying and advocacy work of CSOs at national level – this links to the next point:

- ▪ ***How LDCs influence the international agenda***

Since the "decade of the conferences" in the 1990s, UN conferences, congresses and summits have consistently included a parallel NGO forum or the participation of NGOs/CSOs organized through a specific coordinating committee working with the UN entity most closely linked to the conference topic (UNDP and UNRISD for social development; UNICEF for children etc). NGOs and CSOs typically at these meetings generate much media coverage, particularly when their views do not coincide with those of the government delegations present or when they are unhappy with the outcomes, and there is no doubt that this raises public awareness of important issues and provides alternative views to foster debate.

To what extent, however, do NGO and CSO delegations and representations influence what are essentially political outcomes? Not as much as the NGOs and CSOs themselves may suggest. The outcome documents of major UN meetings have generally been negotiated among governments for many months before they are presented and are rarely subject to negotiation once governments have signed off on them. This is why, at most international meetings, there will be parallel outcome reports/statements by non-governmental participants: NGOs/CSOs, youth delegations etc. in addition to the "official" outcome document.

The reality is that CSOs/NGOs have more influence on policy and practice at *national* level, and that their major contribution to international processes most often comes when their advocacy has been effective on their national government whose delegation will then carry this into governmental debate and processes such as outcome documents.

This was confirmed during interviews with CSOs participating in the project, including LDC Watch itself which, in addition to its role leading the coalition, also has a role through the CSO that hosts it in Nepal, Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), of which the LDC Watch President, Dr Arjun Karki, is CEO. RRN/LDC Watch has been successful in engaging with the Nepalese Government to influence its policies and approaches towards the development issues relevant to the LDC process, and has seen its national advocacy work subsequently bear fruit at international level through the intermediary of the Government of Nepal. At LDC-IV, for example, the Nepalese Government included CSO representatives as part of the country's official delegation and signs are that the views of CSOs from Nepal are well represented through this strong relationship with government.

CSOs are therefore more likely to influence international agendas at a political/UN level through successful advocacy with their own governments. For this reason, enhancing the capacity of CSOs in research and data collection (to build a strong platform for lobbying), advocacy and lobbying, relationship-building with government, and media relations and information processes, is a vital step in ultimately influencing the international agenda, whether in relation to the LDCs or other issues.

Whether such capacity building is best done through formal training or in consultations/meetings depends on a number of factors, including the existing competencies of the participants in the meetings and the format and content of the consultations.

The capacity-building component of this project, however, was not well developed. It related to increasing awareness and understanding of the issues, but not to transferring specific skills in crucial areas such as lobbying and government relations.

These findings lead to Conclusion (ii)

ii.   Effectiveness

All the planned activities were carried out although the targeted number of national consultations planned was not met[4] and consequently participant numbers were lower. Conversely, the number of advocacy events exceeded the targets set. To a large extent this was because, during the life of the project, LDC Watch was able to leverage more funds in order to finance its participation in meetings and consultations to which it was invited as a speaker or participant.

LDC Watch had planned to organize two regional workshops in the Pacific and South East Asia (surprisingly, no regional meeting for Africa was planned, although an international assembly was to take place in Senegal). In fact, five regional consultations took place; four of these were organized in parallel to LDC-IV preparatory/follow-up meetings in cooperation with UN-OHRLLS and relevant UN regional commissions (including one in East Africa), and only one was a stand-alone meeting organized by LDC Watch.

Pacific Civil Society Assembly on LDCs/MDGs,
3-6 August 2010, Vanuatu

The banners produced for these meetings are a visual indicator of the fact that most of these meetings would, in fact, have occurred even if UNDEF support had not been provided, however, since they do not bear the UNDEF emblem but rather the UN-OHRLLS and co-organizer's emblems. This may seem an insignificant observation, however it underlines the important fact that, to a large extent, the UN/LDC process would have continued – with CSO input – in the absence of the UNDEF project.

This is a major concern of the evaluators and contributes to Conclusion (iii)

The original Project Document foreshadowed a global CSO Assembly in Dakar, Senegal, to coincide with the World Social Forum in January 2011. Instead, the Assembly was organized as a side event to the Civil Society Forum at LDC-IV in Istanbul.

▪   *National consultations/workshops*

LDC Watch had anticipated organizing 20 national consultations/workshops with approximately 500 participants, however only 14 such events took place, with some 300 participants. Workshops planned and eventually organized are illustrated in the table below:

Country	Workshop foreshadowed in Project Document	Workshop eventually held
Angola	X	
Central African Republic	X	
DR Congo	X	X
Djibouti	X	
Lesotho	X	
Madagascar	X	X
Malawi	X	
Mozambique	X	X

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[4]   In some cases this was because of security considerations. Some country affiliates were invited to meetings in neighbouring countries (for example Bhutan to Thailand).

Rwanda		X
Senegal	X	
Sudan	X	X
South Sudan		X
Tanzania	X	X
Uganda	X	
Zambia	X	X
Bangladesh		X
Bhutan	X	
Myanmar		X
Nepal	X	X
Cambodia	X	X
Lao PDR	X	X
Solomon Islands	X	X
Tuvalu	X	
Vanuatu	X	

These consultations were intended to be the major avenue for capacity building, however not all of the 300 participants were CSO representatives; governments, UN agency personnel, development partners and the media also attended, and it is therefore questionable how much "capacity building" in the normally accepted meaning of the concept was planned. Although the consultations were important opportunities for exchange of ideas, for putting forward concerns and sharing information – and thus were crucial to LDC Watch's eventual ability to represent CSOs in the various international forums – they did not necessarily leave the CSO participants any more able to influence their national governments or lobby on the issues of concern to them.

▪ *Regional consultations*

Venue	Meeting foreshadowed in Project Document	Meeting eventually held (Parallel to:)
Vanuatu (Pacific)	x	x (41st session Pacific Islands Forum)
Auckland (Pacific)		x (Post-LDC IV briefing)
Bangkok (Asia)	x	x (Asia Civil Society Assembly in partnership with UN-OHRLLS and UNESCAP)
Bangkok (Asia)		x (2nd Asia Civil Society Assembly in partnership with UNESCAP)
Addis Ababa (Africa)		x (Africa Civil Society Assembly in partnership with UN-OHRLLS)

These findings contribute to Conclusion (iv)

▪ *Advocacy events and outputs*

The Project Document foreshadowed the organization of five advocacy events carried out in parallel to major international meetings related to the MDG review and LDC-IV. The 16 events listed as outcomes in the project Final Report are in most cases, in fact, speeches at or participation in events organized by others and do not therefore represent outputs of the project. Only one advocacy event was wholly organized by LDC Watch: a panel discussion at the 2010 European Development Day organized by LDC Watch Europe coordinator Eurostep and the Belgian Presidency of the EU. The Civil Society Forum organized in parallel to LDC-

IV was in reality the result of LDC Watch being invited by the UN Secretary General to coordinate the civil society steering committee for these events and, again, was not a specific outcome of the project.

While the allocation of UNDEF support to permitting LDC Watch to attend and speak at events across the globe may be valid, it must be asked whether these activities really contributed to the capacity building or representation of LDC CSOs that are the main aims of the project.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (v)

In relation to advocacy materials produced, LDC Watch produced a number of high quality brochures, reports and position papers on a range of issues that were fed into LDC-IV and preparatory meetings and disseminated to LDC CSOs. Four principal briefs were produced: *No MDGs without LDCs!; A World Without LDCs*: *Civil society call for a bold new programme for the Least Developed Countries*; *Global civil society report and recommendations to the Fourth UN Conference on the LDCs (Towards a world without LDCs)*; *Climate change: Why the Least Developed Countries concerned the most?*; and *Challenges for ensuring food security in the Least Developed Countries*. Unfortunately, none of these publications bears the UNDEF emblem.

Plans to develop event-specific campaign materials produced only two posters on climate change and LDC-IV, and a promotional brochure on LDC Watch in English and French. No specific campaigns were organized.
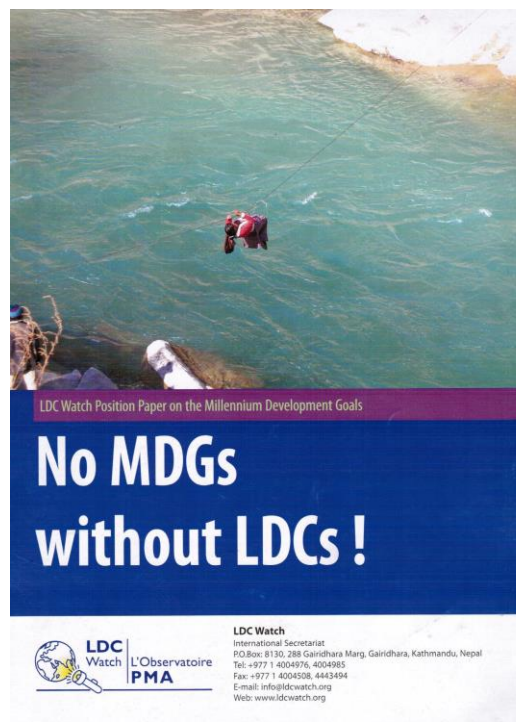
Although funds were allocated to developing the LDC Watch website, at the time of the evaluation the website was not functioning (over a period of several weeks) and links to important documents produced by LDC Watch from the UN-OHRLLS website were broken.

In the Final Report, LDC Watch also listed five "policy dialogues" held in Washington DC, London, Seoul, Canberra and Auckland as project outputs, however it is questionable again whether these were project-related or simply part of LDC Watch's ongoing work.

iii. Efficiency

▪ Budget

Of the USD 300,000 total available funds (USD 25,000 being withheld by UNDEF for evaluation), only USD 22,000 was spent on salaries for the staff at LDC Watch's headquarters in Kathmandu. This represents one salary for a Programme Officer and one Administrative/Finance Assistant. Since the Programme Officer oversaw logistics, materials, content creation and liaison, this represents good value for money. No salary is included in the budget for the Project Director, LDC Watch International Coordinator Dr Arjun Karki, despite his obvious contribution to every component of the work undertaken. This both reflects the nature of Dr Karki's dual role as CEO of RRN "seconded" in a way to the umbrella coalition LDC Watch, but also reinforces the conclusion that the advocacy outcomes claimed for this

project were in fact often independent of the support received from UNDEF, financed by leveraged funds, or destined to occur whether or not the grant had been made.

The same is not true, however, of the bringing together of CSO partners in the coalition. The budget allocation for national and regional consultations plus the global assembly was more than two-thirds of the grant: USD 218,000. It seems certain, then, that the UNDEF support given allowed LDC CSOs to participate in the various meetings organized around the MDC review and in preparation for LDC-IV, even if the meetings themselves were not dependent on the grant.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (vi).

▪ ***Information and dissemination***

LDC Watch partner organizations interviewed almost all said that they used the LDC Watch website, with only one organization saying it does so only infrequently. This raises some concerns about the effort and financial investment made in the website and whether, given the obvious need for some kind of vehicle that would allow the LDC Watch network to share ideas and information and access joint position papers and materials, more attention should not have been paid to this.

For almost two months before and during the evaluation, the LDC Watch website was not accessible. Disconcertingly, because of LDC Watch's recognized role as coordinator of CSO processes around the UN/LDC process and as "rapporteur" for CSO-focused events, UN websites referencing the process provide links to the LDC Watch website for users seeking documentation. When the LDC Watch website is down, therefore, there are no alternative avenues for accessing necessary information.[5] It is therefore unfortunate that only USD 1,000 was allocated in the budget to developing and maintaining the website for the 25 months of the project. Clearly this was inadequate, particularly in relation to the budget for paper publications, which was USD 18,000. While respondents did use the hard copy materials – with one noting the "rich content" of the materials – realistically networking, exchange and updating and development of knowledge must be done through an on-line platform.
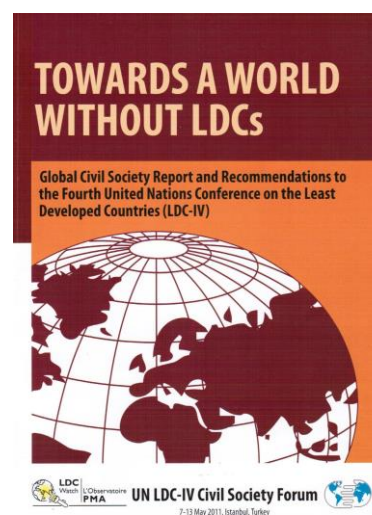
Civil society report to LDC-IV

These findings contribute to Conclusion (vii)

iv. Impact
The impact of this project has to be evaluated at a number of different levels:

▪ ***Impact on the participants***
The LDC Watch partners who attended (and in a number of cases organized or co-organized) the national, regional and international meetings listed a number of positive impacts their participation had on them and their organizations. These were not necessarily the intended outcomes – enhanced capacity and strategic input to a joint platform for LDC-IV – but they were undoubtedly important for the participants and perhaps reflected the fact that the partners

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5   At the time of writing this evaluation, the site was functioning again.

were not "equal" in the sense that some would have welcomed more capacity building than others, for example.

The major impact on the participants was quite simply the ability to be part of "something bigger". Most of the respondents had not been able to attend LDC-IV in Istanbul, but were confident that through their participation in the various meetings, they had been able to contribute and that their views had been put forward.

Most of the respondents also appreciated the opportunity to meet and learn from CSOs both in their own country/region and from other countries. While there was no formal capacity building, therefore, the respondents believed that there was "better understanding" gained through opportunities to exchange ideas and experiences with other CSOs.

Less positive were the comments that indicated that participants recognized both a need and a desire for more capacity building and that this had not been a strong component of the project. One respondent noted that CSOs had become "more energized but need to be more active and focused".

> "One of the main outcomes of the consultation for my organization is getting to know the other civil society actors."
>
> **LDC Watch partner in DR Congo**
>
> "The most important outcome of the [Asia-Pacific] consultation for my organization was the networking and collaboration."
>
> **LDC Watch partner in Myanmar**
>
> "We have a clearer understanding and insight and inspiration to work together with millions of others living in other LDCs."
>
> **LDC Watch partner in Bangladesh**

This was echoed in the responses of UN-OHRLLS, who saw a role for LDC Watch in building the capacity of LDC CSOs: "It goes without saying that it is necessary to ensure that civil society actors are equipped with the necessary skills, information to engage effectively in national, regional and global processes".

These findings contribute to Conclusion (viii).

▪ *Impact on regional and international processes*
The impact of CSO participation on the regional and international processes is impossible to measure. Views on such participation regularly range from cynical suggestions that such participation is "token" and designed rather to allow meeting organizers to "tick the box", to firm opinions that debate and discussion can only be enriched by bringing in different perspectives, particularly when they involve the people and organizations who work on priority issues every day and whose knowledge and understanding of on-the-ground realities is crucial to full understanding.

The views of the CSO respondents differed on this matter. Some believed that just being able to participate and speak out was enough to engender change (or the beginnings of change). One, for example, noted that at LDC-IV "the civil society report was well received and the CSO representative was given the floor to speak in the official session. This was a unique opportunity where government representatives were informed of the CSO action agenda, which is important for continued government-civil society partnership at the national and global levels".

Another, conversely, thought that the CSOs that attended the regional meetings were poorly prepared and that they should have been involved earlier in the process – suggesting that the national consultations were not enough to prepare for the regional meetings, or did not involve all or the same CSOs.

Again, the opinion was expressed by a number of respondents that ultimately the major impact of LDC CSOs is likely to be – and perhaps should be – on their national governments, both with a view to enhancing national collaboration and action and also so that CSO experience

and priorities are fully integrated into government delegations' inputs to UN processes. One respondent suggested that this should ultimately be the main task of LDC Watch: "to root the activity within CSO coalitions within LDCs, providing support and then overall direction at the regional and international levels". The same respondent noted, however, that "this requires significant and continuous levels of resources at national, regional and international levels to ensure capacities and that coordination and governance can be effective. Such resources have been hard to secure". There is more on this in the section on Sustainability.

Another respondent reinforced this view that change can only come when local CSOs are able to influence and work with their national governments, but also with national authorities at local levels, and that this area is not sufficiently addressed. The respondent noted that, "the key is making change at national level, so follow-up from these international meetings is crucial. Unfortunately, between the LDC meetings, the momentum tends to slow down".

> "Ongoing engagement between CSOs and their governments can help to strengthen the position of LDC governments. CSO involvement at regional and international levels can be built on this, both as a strategy for CSOs themselves and as participants in official assessments and preparatory processes at regional and ultimately at global levels. In this context, national meetings must go beyond being consultations and be mechanisms for ongoing engagement with government."
>
> **LDC Watch partner in Europe**

These findings contribute to Conclusion (ix).

▪ ***Impact on the outcomes of LDC-IV***

Ultimately, the question must be asked whether the efforts of LDC Watch and its partners, and the activities undertaken as part of the project, had a tangible impact on the outcome document of LDC-IV and consequently on national and international agendas relating to the LDCs.

Here, again, opinions differ. LDC Watch is confident that the LDC-IV outcome document was materially changed by the input of civil society in the preparations and deliberations for the Istanbul meeting. Dr Karki noted that it was at the consultation in Addis Ababa that the idea of "graduation" of countries from LDC status was raised for the first time, and that a target for graduations (50 per cent of all current LDCs by 2020) was then included in the IPoA. However this is not strictly correct; the notion of "graduation" is mentioned in UN documents as early as the 1970s, although it was not a recurring theme and there was certainly no target set before LDC-IV, so perhaps it is more a case of "graduation" being re-activated as a critical target.

Dr Karki also noted that the outcome document from LDC-IV is more action-oriented and focused than earlier PoAs, although he remains critical of it.

Another respondent believed that, "the LDC PoAs have been hostage to broader interests of the international community, and this was no different for LDC-IV". In fact, this respondent believed, this was even more the case at LDC-IV "because of changing geopolitical relations". Yet another considered that, "It may be said that the contributions and concerns (of LDC CSOs) were not captured enough in the final declaration, however the vibrant engagement of civil society and the genuine concern and level of commitment has no doubt demonstrated the need for a new approach of inclusive processes in the UN".

On balance, the respondents felt that the participation of LDC CSOs was important – and high quality – but that "it was not clear that this led to significant changes in the text". One respondent, interestingly, noted that CSOs "helped shape the way that the media reported on the conference" – a not uncommon result of civil society actions around international

conferences – and this in itself is an important if longer-term contribution to the debate on the LDCs and the challenges facing them.

UN-OHRLLS suggested that the major contribution of LDC CSOs was not necessarily to the outcome document itself but rather to ensuring that governments fulfil their commitments, a more traditional view of the role of CSOs.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (x).

Civil Society Forum plenary at LDC-IV
May 2011, Istanbul

v. Sustainability

▪ *An ongoing role*

LDC Watch is the only coalition of LDC CSOs fully engaged in the UN/LDC process and recognized by all actors in this process as a legitimate interlocutor. There is therefore no question that there is an ongoing role for LDC Watch, even if the interlude between LDC conferences is significant (10 years). In this interlude, there is first implementation of the IPoA to monitor, and then preparation for LDC-V, but additionally LDC Watch has now engaged its partners in reviewing progress on the MDGs, so there is plenty of work to do.

This evaluation suggests, also, that there is an important role for LDC Watch to play in providing or facilitating more formal capacity building for its partners, especially in countries that are newly recognized as LDCs such as South Sudan.

UN-OHRLLS indicates that it sees LDC CSOs as essential contributors, also, to the implementation of LDC-IV. However the respondent also noted that this requires sustained funding and that, "should funds to support organizations such as LDC Watch not be forthcoming, it is likely that a key component of the implementation of the IPoA will fall away. This will undermine the action plan in general as LDC Watch also serves to advocate and create ongoing consensus among non-state actors".

▪ *Funds for the interlude*

During the period of the UNDEF grant, LDC Watch was fully engaged in the LDC and MDG processes and, additionally, was a recognized key actor with a high profile among not only LDC CSOs and governments but development actors in non-LDC countries also. As a result, it was able to leverage both cooperation and additional funding from sources such as UNDP. Now that LDC-IV is concluded and the next MDG review is some time off, LDC Watch may find it more difficult to access funds for its work. The nature of LDC CSOs, moreover, means that "membership" of LDC Watch does not incur fees and few of the member organizations are in a position to contribute to the coalition's finances.

None of the respondents had concrete suggestions on how this threat to sustainability might be addressed. While LDC Watch has no major overheads – it is RRN that in reality inhabits the headquarters building, employs the staff and manages the resources – there is a real possibility that what this means is that LDC Watch also has no 'presence' other than a website and a logo that is affixed to some statements made by Dr Karki and occasional reports or publications. LDC Watch effectively becomes, between conferences and reviews, little more than a name given to a group of CSOs who continue their work as usual.

While in some ways this may be a good thing, since LDC Watch as an "idea" rather than a reality costs very little to maintain, it also means that LDC Watch's outputs and profile are difficult to maintain and so funds are less likely to be available except on the basis of a project, for example a research and writing exercise.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (xi)

▪ ***Succession planning***

It is important to note, also, that while LDC Watch is made up of independent CSOs that each have their specific identity, portfolio and personalities, at regional and international levels the organization is firmly identified with the person of Dr Karki and benefits from his personal reputation and credibility. This is again in many ways a good thing; Dr Karki's reputation opens doors, attracts invitations to key events and facilitates inclusion where lesser-known CSO representatives might find it difficult to gain entrance. However dependence on one person is also a risk.[6]

LDC Watch in Kathmandu needs to begin thinking about a strategy for succession planning to ensure that there will be continuity of leadership at the same level as now. This may involve eventually transferring leadership of LDC Watch to another organization, potentially in another country, and in that case hand-over will be more complex and more difficult to manage. The Board of LDC Watch is ultimately responsible for such succession planning, and the time to do this is now, during the "interlude".

These findings contribute to Conclusion (xi)

vi. UNDEF value-added

UNDEF support to LDC Watch undoubtedly allowed it to include more LDC CSOs in planned activities but, more importantly, to leverage additional funds to boost it work in preparation for LDC-IV. The value-added of the project for UNDEF, however, is not clear. Because of the nature of the UN/LDC process, UNDEF's support was not prominent and indeed often the support was not formally recognized (for example on banners and publications). The prominent role of UN-OHRLLS and the regional commissions in what is essentially a political process means that UNDEF support, while useful to LDC Watch, was not determinant.

This finding leads to Conclusion (xiii).

Asia LDC Civil Society Strategy Assembly towards the Implementation of the IPoA, 15-16 May 2012, Bangkok

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[6] This comment should not be seen as in any way underestimating the notable capacity and competence of the Programme Officer at LDC Watch. It reflects only that this young woman has not yet had the opportunity to build her personal and professional profile in the international forums in which Dr Karki has worked for some years.

IV.   Conclusions

   i.   The project was relevant in relation to the general coordinating/representational role of LDC Watch. LDC Watch's recognized leadership of collaborative CSO input to the UN/LDC process means that the components of the project that aimed to build on this – the various consultations and participation in regional and international forums – were *de facto* relevant.

   ii.   The relevance of the project is questionable, however, in relation to the capacity building and empowerment of constituent CSOs who participated in the project. This stems from the fact that the project did not sufficiently, *ab initio*, consider what the main avenue of LDC CSO influence really is – through their national governments who then carry CSO concerns as part of the national input into what are essentially political processes at international level. If this reality had been appropriately recognized during the project planning stage, it would have indicated a much more prominent need for capacity building of partner CSOs in the skills required to achieve this national influence.

   iii.   The project was only partially effective.   The evaluators are concerned that many, if not most of the advocacy activities listed as outputs of the project were in reality opportunistic to the extent that they involved the Project Director taking up invitations from other parties or participating in events organized by others. Useful as these may have been to the debate around LDCs, they were not part of the project strategy nor planning. The evaluators were led to consider that the number of activities directly resulting from the project were outnumbered by those that would have taken place even without UNDEF support.

   iv.   The number of participants from partner CSOs should have been higher. While it is understandable that the planned 20 national consultations were reduced to 14 given country-level obstacles, it is nevertheless disappointing that numbers at the consultations that were held were not increased so that the target of 500 participants might be reached. Only 300 CSO representatives participated in the national and regional consultations – 60 per cent of the target.

   v.   The advocacy component hijacked the potential for capacity building. There is no doubt that LDC Watch's representational responsibilities were fulfilled during the project – indeed, the invitations and unplanned opportunities to "spread the message" meant that there were more opportunities for LDC Watch to represent LDC CSO's concerns in a number of forums. However this heavy load of speaking engagements across the globe meant that the intended outcome of strengthening and empowerment of partner CSOs was not well developed.

   vi.   The modest funds allocated to headquarters support suggest that many of the activities undertaken were independent of the UNDEF grant. It is a positive outcome that UNDEF support may have helped LDC Watch to leverage additional funds (some USD 145,000) from other donors, however this begs the question of whether in fact many of the components of the project would, in fact, have taken place without the grant and have been funded by others.

   vii.   More investment needs to be made in modalities for facilitating networking and information exchange among the CSO partners. The very small amount

of project funding allocated to the website (USD 1,000) suggests that not enough attention has been paid to the very important role that some form of interactive platform for networking and information exchange plays in keeping partners informed but also allowing them to share and exchange ideas. In the interlude between LDC conferences, this may become increasingly important.

viii. ***LDC Watch has an important role to play in capacity building and training of CSO partners***. A number of respondents called for more formal training and capacity building in the skills required to equip CSOs to function effectively at national level.

ix. ***LDC CSOs' major area of influence is in the work they do in relation to their own governments and indeed at other levels of authority in their countries***. Respondents identified the need for CSOs in LDCs to work systematically with the authorities in order to address national development challenges and together build consensus that would be carried forward into international forums. Respondents believed that LDC Watch had a role to play in this and that indeed it may be LDC Watch's main role.

x. ***The impact of the project activities on the LDC-IV outcome document is questionable.*** Although all the respondents believed that LDC CSO participation at various levels had contributed considerably to debate and to greater awareness of the issues facing LDCs, few considered that this had translated into impact on the outcome of LDC-IV (the IP0A), which is essentially a political outcome decided by governments.

xi. ***Ongoing funding is a threat to sustainability.*** The nature of LDC Watch, which is essentially an "agreement" among LDC CSOs rather than a bricks-and-mortar organization, and the decade-long interlude between LDC conferences, means that raising funds is an ongoing challenge.

xii. ***Over-reliance on one person's credibility and profile is a risk***. LDC Watch is fortunate to have an internationally recognized leader whose credibility and reputation open doors and certainly add to its impact, however over-reliance on one person is a risk to sustainability. Succession planning, especially now in the interlude between LDC conferences, should be a priority.

xiii. ***The value-added of the project to UNDEF is not clear***. Because of the embedded nature of the LDC process in other agencies of the UN, including UN-OHRLLS and the regional commissions, UNDEF's support was not highly visible and was probably not determinant.

V.   Recommendations

For LDC Watch:

_i._   (Based on Conclusions i, ii, iv, v, viii and ix): _**Take the opportunity of the interlude between LDC conferences to strategize the role of LDC Watch in coming years and build a workplan around this.**_ There is no doubt that LDC Watch's work in representing LDC CSO constituents at regional and international levels is important, however the evaluation suggested that there is a huge unmet demand for capacity building, training and guidance that will help CSOs to work more effectively at national and local levels and ultimately better influence their national governments so that they then carry forward more CSO priorities into international forums.

It is important to remember that, ultimately, UN conferences are inter-governmental meetings that set the agenda for government actions in implementing the agreements made. It is unlikely that representations by CSOs – even valid and well-made representations – at regional and international forums are likely to influence decisions that have, in most instances, already been made. The time for influence (and advocacy and lobbying) is in the months and years between conferences, and this realistically must be done at national level. LDC Watch has a role to play in reinforcing CSOs' capacities to do this on an ongoing basis. Moreover, such a role might realistically attract funding support on a more consistent basis.

This is an overarching recommendation that derives from six of the 12 conclusions reached by the evaluators.

_ii._   (Based on Conclusions xi and xii): _**While developing a robust strategy and plans for the future, consider also the risks to sustainability and act to mitigate these.**_ The first risk is funding, and recommendation (i) above suggests that a new action plan that takes account of distinct needs identified by the CSO partners might go some way to addressing this. It is not sustainable to base the organization's activities around the MDG reviews and LDC conferences to the exclusion of other, ongoing activities. While information and advocacy are crucial, capacity building and servicing the needs of member CSOs must also be considered, planned and submitted for project funding to relevant donors.

The second principal risk arises from potential over-reliance on one person to carry forward the reputation and many of the outputs of the organization. It would be a good idea for the Board to begin to consider potential succession plans now, while there is some "down time" for the organization. This may not necessarily involve a person as successor to the current International Coordinator – it may include a different organization as the next Secretariat.

iii.   (Based on Conclusion vii): _**Despite scarce resources, make sure that (as far as possible) sufficient resources are allocated to the LDC Watch website and other on-line mechanisms for networking and exchange**_. As a loosely structured coalition, LDC Watch must depend on technology to provide the links that CSO members need to keep in touch, source needed materials and engage in exchange of ideas and experiences. This can be an expensive component of coordination, however it is crucial to the strength of the coalition and should be prioritized. It may be that further strengthening this part of LDC Watch's work would be a suitable project to propose to a donor.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

General evaluation question categories

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents reviewed

Background documents
Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/CONF.191/11)
Brussels Programme of Action: Addressing the special needs of the Least Developed Countries, UN-OHRLLS, New York 2006
Outcome document, Africa regional preparatory meeting on the review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, UN-OHRLLS, UNDP and ECA, March 2010
Asia-Pacific regional review of the Brussels Programme of Action for the LDCs for the decade 2001-2010: Dhaka outcome document, UNESCAP, March 2010 (E/ESCAP/66/6)
Towards a new partnership for LDCs: Brainstorming report, UN-OHRLLS, July 2010
Pacific civil society assembly on LDCs/MDGs, Port Vila, Vanuatu, August 2010
European development days: Proceedings, EU, Brussels, December 2010

Project outputs
Civil society assembly for addressing development challenges in African LDCs: Draft proceedings, Addis Ababa, March 2010
UN LDC IV Conference: LDC civil society engagement, Istanbul, Turkey, May 2011
Towards a world without LDCs: Global civil society report and recommendations to the fourth United Nations Conference on the LDCs (LDC-IV), LDC Watch, June 2011
A world without LDCs: Civil society call for a bold new programme of action for the LDCs, LDC Watch, 2011
Civil society briefing paper for LDC-IV, LDC Watch, 2011
No MDGs without LDCs! LDC Watch position paper on the Millennium Development Goals, LDC Watch, n.d.
Thematic information brochures
Press clippings file
Copies of statements made at LDC-IV by LDC Watch

Project documentation
Project Document, UDF-GLO-09-283
Final Project Narrative Report, UDF-GLO-09-283
Democratizing governance for development: LDC civil society engagement, a report to UNDEF

Annex 3: People Interviewed

LDC Watch Secretariat, Kathmandu, Nepal	
Dr Arjun Karki	International Coordinator, LDC Watch
Prerna Bomzan	Advocacy Coordinator, LDC Watch
Preeza Shresta	Programme Officer, LDC Watch
Praman Adhikari	Programme Officer, LDC Watch
NGO partner - Nepal	
Dr Netra Prasad Timsina	NGO Federation of Nepal/Forest Action Nepal
NGO partners by remote interview	
Barry Coates	Former Executive Director, Oxfam New Zealand
Rezaul Karim Chowdhury	Chief Moderator, Equity and Justice Working Group Bangladesh
Danny Singoma	Administrator, Reseau Proddes, DR Congo
Tzanne Poe	Director, Karen Women Action Group, Myanmar
Azeb Girmai	Country Coordinator, Enda Ethiopia
Mohiuddin Ahmad	Chairperson, Nabodhara, Bangladesh
Simon Stocker	Director, Eurostep, Brussels
UN-OHRLLS	
Ricardo Dunn	Advocacy and Outreach Officer Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)

Annex 4: Acronyms

ARCADE	Organisation africaine de recherche et de coopération pour l'appui au développement endogène
BPoA	Brussels Programme of Action
CBO	Community-based organization
CDP	Committee for Development Policy
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COP16	16th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
CSO	Community service organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECOSOC	(UN) Economic and Social Council
EQ	Evaluation Questions
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
IPoA	Istanbul Programme of Action
LDC	Least Developed Country
LDC-II	Second UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Paris 1990)
LDC-III	Third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Brussels 2001)
LDC-IV	Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Istanbul 2011)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PICS	Pacific Island Countries
RRN	Rural Reconstruction Nepal
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN-OHRLLS	Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute on Social Development
USD	United States dollar